

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 PC-01 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00

XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01 OMB-01 SSO-00

NSCE-00 DHA-02 ACDA-07 /098 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2033

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

USSOUTHCOM

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL BARRANQUIPLA

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, ECON, ELAB, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. MRS. CARTER'S VISIT SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED WITH A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND FONMIN LIEVANO. MAY COST OF LIVING FIGURES INDICATED THAT THE INFLATION RATE IN 1977 MAY BE AROUND 35 PERCENT, ALTHOUGH UNIONS CLAIMED THE FIGURES ARE IN-ACCURATE. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S ONLY PROCLAIMED CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION WITHDREW. STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUED TO PLAGUE THE GOC, WITH ONE FATALITY REPORTED. THE ARMY CAPTURED 13 RURAL GUERRILLAS BUT LOST IN A SEPARATE FIRE-FIGHT IN ANOTHER AREA OF THE COUNTRY. END SUMMARY.

2. FIRST LADY CONCLUDES SUCCESSFUL VISIT. MRS. CARTER'S JUNE 9-10 VISIT TO BOGOTA, THE PENULTIMATE STOP ON HER LATIN AMERICAN TOUR, CONCLUDED WITH A MEETING WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND FONMIN LIEVANO (SEPTTEL). AMONG THE ISSUES DISCUSSED WERE HUMAN RIGHTS, U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA, AND NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. DURING HER STAY, MRS. CARTER ALSO MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND EMBASSY STAFF. THE COLOMBIANS GAVE THE FIRST LADY A CORDIAL WELCOME, FREE OF ANY VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE VISIT (SEE BELOW), ALTHOUGH THE GOC

TOOK HEAVY SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. (BOGOTA 5393).

3. MAY COST OF LIVING FIGURES RELEASED. THE COST OF LIVING FIGURES FOR MAY, WHILE STILL HIGH, SHOWED SOME IMPROVEMENT OVER APRIL. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT, DURING THE MONTH OF MAY, THE PRICE INDEX INCREASED BY 4.7 PERCENT FOR WORKERS AND 3.7 PERCENT FOR WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES, DOWN FROM 7.6 PERCENT AND 6 PERCENT IN APRIL. BASIC FOOD ITEMS, AGAIN LED THE WAY, WITH HIGHER THAN USUAL INCREASES FOR THOSE ITEMS WHICH ARE STAPLES IN THE WORKINGMAN'S DIET. IF THE PATTERNS OF PRIOR YEARS ARE REPEATED, THE RATE OF INFLATION WILL SLOW CONSIDERABLY OVER THE NEXT SEVEN MONTHS, AND THE ANNUAL COL INCREASE FOR WORKERS COULD BE IN THE RANGE OF 35 PERCENT.

4. REACTIONS TO COST OF LIVING FIGURES. LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WERE RELATIVELY QUIET OVER THE ANNOUNCED COST OF LIVING FIGURES. NATIONAL LEADERS SIMPLY NOTED THAT THEY DOUBTED THE ACCURACY OF THE NEW FIGURES, CLAIMING THAT INFLATION CONTINUED TO HIT HARD AT THE AVERAGE WORKER'S TAKE-HOME PAY DURING MAY. THE COMMUNIST LABOR CONFEDERATION USED THE FIGURES TO STEP UP ITS EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE A GENERAL STRIKE TO PROTEST INFLATION, BUT NO DATE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. THE NEW FIGURES ALSO CAME IN TIME TO GIVE ADDED IMPETUS TO DEMONSTRATIONS BY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN VARIOUS CITIES ON JUNE 8. (SEE BELOW).

5. CONSERVATIVE PRE-CANDIDATE STEPS DOWN. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY LOST ITS ONLY PROCLAIMED CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHEN EX-MINISTER JAIME GARCIA PARRA ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT FROM CONSIDERATION. THIS LEAVES THE CONSERVATIVES WITH NO ACTIVE CANDIDATE, SINCE BELISARIO BETANCUR CONTINUES TO PROCLAIM HIS NON-INTEREST IN THE JOB, EVEN THOUGH ACTING VERY MUCH LIKE A CANDIDATE. LEADERS OF THE OSPINA-PASTRANA WING OF THE PARTY HAVE OFFERED NO CANDIDATE AS YET, SAYING THAT THEY WILL WAIT UNTIL THE PARTY CONVENTION LATER THIS YEAR TO MAKE THEIR DECISION. ARGUMENTS OVER THE SEPARATION OF ELECTIONS ALSO CONTINUED, AS LIBERAL PARTY HOPEFUL JULIO CESAR TURBAY AVALA SUGGESTED THAT HIS PARTY MEET WITH LEADERS OF THE CONSERVATIVES' ALVARISTA SEGMENT TO WORK OUT A

COMMON STRATEGY TO GET THIS AMENDMENT PASSED. HIS SUGGESTION WAS CRITICIZED BY SUPPORTERS OF EX-PRESIDENT LLERAS RESTEREO, WHO SEE THE NEED FOR A LIBERAL PARTY CONSENSUS AS BEING OF MORE IMMEDIATE IMPORTANCE.

6. PUBLIC ORDER/ STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, MANY OF THEM

VIOLENT, OCCURED IN SEVERAL CITIES ON JUNE 8, A TRADITIONAL DAY OF STUDENT PROTEST FOR THE PAST 48 YEARS. THE ONLY SERIOUS DISTURBANCES TOOK PLACE IN CALI AND MEDELLIN WHERE A NUMBER OF PERSONS WERE INJURED AND ONE STUDENT WAS SHOT TO DEATH. AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT WAS ALSO MADE TO FIRE-BOMB THE U.S. CONSULATE IN CALI. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, COLOMBIAN ARMY TROOPS CAPTURED 13 FARC GUERILLAS AND CONFISCATED MANY WEAPONS AFTER A CLASH IN RURAL BOYACA. THE ARMY WAS LESS SUCCESSFUL IN ANOTHER CONFORNTATION WITH THE FARC NEAR THE CITY OF NEIVA; IN THIS INCIDENT, AN OFFICER WAS KILLED AND TOW SOLDIERS WERE WOUNDED WHEN THE GUERRILLAS AMBUSHED AN ARMY PATROL. ITALIAN BANKER GUISEPPE MONDINI, WHO HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED IN MARCH (BOGOTA 2597) WAS RELEASED JUNE 5 AFTER THE PAYMENT OF A REPORTED 3 MILLION PESO RANSOM. AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN GUSTAVO CURTIS, WHO HAD BEEN RELEASED APPROXIMATELY A WEEK EARLIER BY HIS KIDNAPPERS, LEFT COLOMBIA THIS WEEK FOR THE UNITED STATES.

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Message Attributes

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